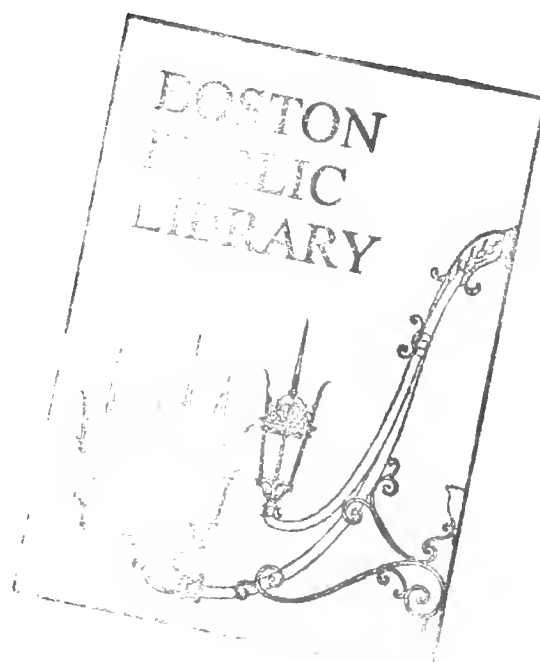


Government
Resolutions

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Kittredge Square



MODEL CITIES
Roxbury
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KITTREDGE SQUARE URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT
SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE REPORT

Boston Redevelopment Authority
Planning Department

March, 1973

KITTREDGE SQUARE URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT
SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE REPORT



SITE LOCATION
FOREST HILLS
CEMETERY

MICHAEL'S

BOSTON STATE

HOSPITAL

FRANKLIN
FIELD

KATHOLIC
CEM

CODMAN

KITTREDGE SQUARE URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT
SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE WORKSHEET

A.1 DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING COMMUNITY

a. Socio-Economic Factors

1. Population

The population of the Model Cities area in 1970 was 49,265, a decrease of 21.7% since 1960. The decrease occurred equally in all age categories except 10-24, which remained constant.

Population in Sub-Area Two within which the project lies is 7,513.

2. Income

The median family income for the Model Cities area was \$6,476.00, considerably lower than the City of Boston's median family income of \$9,133.00 and only a small increase over the 1960 median family income of \$6,304.00 (1970 prices).

3. Housing

In 1970, the Model Cities area had 17,175 housing units which represents a 15.4% decrease since 1960 and a 21.7% decrease since 1950. Furthermore, the contiguous areas of Washington Park and Campus High (both Urban Renewal Projects) have experienced 21.9% and 57.2% decreases in housing units respectively since 1960. Of the 14,930 occupied units 1,699 are labelled overcrowded and 519 lack some plumbing facilities.

4. Housing Vacancies

The 1970 census indicates 2,234 vacant dwelling units (13%). Many of these are vacant and not available for sale or rent because they are without adequate plumbing facilities or have serious deficiencies making them unrentable without substantial rehabilitation.





Within Sub-Area Two of the Model Cities Area, 25% of the structures are vacant.

5. Rent Levels

Rent levels in Model Cities are between \$60 and \$120. Within Sub-Area Two, the median rent is \$80 per month.



AREA ACTIVITY

-  SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR
-  KITTREDGE SQUARE
-  CAMPUS HIGH
-  WASHINGTON PARK

6. Drugs and Crime

The Model Cities area has a high incidence of drug use and high incidence of crime, among the highest for the City as a whole. Police estimate 60% of all crimes committed are drug related-- possession, sale of drugs, in addition to purse-snatching, larceny and breaking and entering. Vacant and partially vacant buildings become havens for such illegal activities and help accelerate the pace of blight and deterioration and serve to accelerate a decrease in community concern to a dangerous level where residents fear leaving their homes.

b. Existing Land Use

The principle land use in the Kittredge Square sector of the Model Cities area is residential. Kittredge Square is a built up area including 192 buildings on 27.3 acres. 20.8 acres are residential in character; 5.5 are streets, alleys and right-of-ways, 0.6 are commercial; and 0.4 is public.

Of the 192 buildings in the project, 175 are residential and 17 are non-residential. The Kittredge Square area is between Washington Park and Campus High Urban Renewal Projects which, when completed will serve to up-grade the area and prevent surrounding blight to impact the results of the Kittredge Square project.

c. Open Space

The Project Area is not well served by parks or open areas and it is proposed that the park area at Kittredge Square be revitalized and one more public park be developed. Along with these parks there would be two more areas to be used by abutters to the Project area.

d. Building Condition

Of the 174 structures within the project, 24 are in a deteriorated condition, 106 are deteriorating and 44 are considered sound. Twenty buildings are vacant.

A.2 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY

The Kittredge Square Urban Renewal Project is an urban renewal project to be carried out under Title I of the Federal Housing Act of 1949, as amended, and chapter 121 B of the General Laws of Massachusetts. Development of vacant lot parcels and rehabilitation activities are planned. The project area, located in the Roxbury Model Cities. Sub Area Two section of the City of Boston, is 27.3 acres in size. The total gross project cost is estimated at \$2,496,426.

The basic objectives of urban renewal activity in the Kittredge Square project area are:

1. To provide low-rent housing to meet the needs of low-income households and individuals.
2. To implement and advance the national goals of increasing the existing housing supply for low-income families and individuals.
3. To insure the residential character of the area in conformity with the City of Boston's general plan for the Highland Park area, and to increase available low-income housing to contribute towards fulfilling the goals of the Workable Program for Community Improvements.
Kittredge Square is an area of potential historic and architectural preservation with a full cross section of architecture of the period 1830-1900. The Boston Landmarks Commission is presently working on designating the area between John Eliot Square and Highland Park as a national historical preservation area with National Registration status. The Kittredge Square area is wholly within this proposed district.
4. To eliminate obsolete and deteriorating buildings and utilize vacant lots which depress the physical condition and character of the area and contribute to the growth of blighted areas.
5. To provide parklands and open spaces for use by community residents and their children which will foster greater pride in the area.
6. To make public improvements such as improved street lighting and roadways to improve the appearance and livability of the area and contribute to a reduction in crime.

A.2 PROPOSED PROJECTS

The project is intended to construct 80 new housing units and to rehabilitate 100 other units. Three park areas will provide playground and recreational areas. Certain currently vacant lands will be leased to abutters for open space and parking purposes thereby decreasing the density of the area.

The proposed project was created in the context of existing and proposed development in the broader Highland Park community. Specifically, the Roxbury Action Program (R.A.P.) is developing a new moderate income construction and rehabilitation proposal which is within and immediately adjacent to the Kittredge Square Project area.

Disposition parcels R4 and S2 will be disposed by R.A.P. to lessen the overall density of their development.

A.3 NEED FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSING

The project area has one of the highest percentages of low-income families in Boston and the demand for low-income housing within the area far exceeds the existing supply. The median gross rent within Sub Area Two is estimated at \$80 per month. Thirty-six percent of the families in this area have incomes below \$5,000 and 51% of the rental households have incomes under \$5,000.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED PROJECT

1. Community Impact

Implementation of the Kittredge Square Project will eliminate a seriously blighted and deteriorating area which is detrimental to the safety, health, morals, welfare, and sound growth of the Model Cities area. Substandard structures, vacant and unused land, and other indications of serious blight and deterioration are present throughout the project area, including incompatible land uses, improper location of structures, and buildings unsuitable for use.

In addition to eliminating specific, adverse environmental conditions, the implementation of the Kittredge Square Project will provide more positive environmental conditions which will substantially improve the livability of the area and promote confidence in the area's future.

The Kittredge Square Urban Renewal Project aims to initiate a reversal of negative trends through the construction of 80 town houses and the rehabilitation of 100 existing units. By increasing the supply of decent low-income housing, the urban renewal project will have a significant impact on the social and physical character of the area, as long-term residents become attracted to Kittredge Square once more. The proposed plan will increase the available housing stock by 50%, resulting in the elimination of building vacancy; while the creation of three parks will further enhance the social climate of the area. Thus, with the re-establishment of community made possible by these activities, the area may be expected to experience a reduction in criminal activity and regain its social equilibrium.

The principal public facilities in the neighborhood are three public elementary schools--all very old, long overcrowded, and poorly maintained. The Model Neighborhood Board has already launched discussions on closing one of the schools and finding an appropriate site for a new elementary school (to be located in Subarea 2). The addition of new housing stock to the area will not adversely affect the current school situation, since many children already attend schools other than the three mentioned above; and plans for the new school will take into consideration the altered neighborhood profile of which the new housing units will form a part.

2. Noise Quality

Impact of the Environment on the Project

The edge of the project is located 700 feet from the center line of the Penn Central right-of-way which accommodates commuter trains to and from Boston. The project is located at a height level of 150

feet, 120 feet above the railway, an effective barrier in the form of residential development between the project and the railway. The noise impact generated by the railway is in the clearly acceptable range. The edge of the project is also 600 feet from Columbus Avenue, a major arterial which carries automobile and truck north-south traffic. Automobile traffic is 4 and truck traffic is calculated at 95 vehicles per hour. The noise impact generated by this arterial is considered normally acceptable. The project area is not adversely impacted by aircraft.

Impact Within the Project

There are presently 154 dwelling units within the project area with no major through streets. Furthermore, due to the lower income status of residents, automobile ownership is low; 90 automobiles are presently registered within the project area. The project will add 80 new units and rehab 20 other units which are vacant increasing the dwelling units to 254. These 254 dwelling units will generate trips which are within the normally acceptable range.

3. Visual Quality

By eliminating the deteriorating structures and inappropriate land uses and by providing newly designed and rehabilitated housing, the quality of the visual environment will be improved.

4. Air Quality

It is not anticipated that the proposed 80 new housing units will surcharge traffic so as to have a significant adverse impact on the ambient air quality at the site.

5. Water Quality

The Project will discharge its wastes into a separate sanitary sewer line within the project limits and a major rebuilding of the existing water system will be undertaken. All existing houses in the Project Area will be connected to the new water system.

6. Existing Environmental Impacts from External Areas

The Southwest Corridor and Highlands Park Areas to the west and south are vacant and deteriorated areas which have been part of the increasing blight which has occurred in the Model Cities Areas for the past 20 years. The Southwest Expressway, planned since the early 1950's has exerted an adverse impact on the neighborhoods abutting the right-of-way. Since the right-of-way was initiated in 1968, 770 residences and 300 businesses were displaced. The threat of the highway generated an instability in the neighborhoods which abutted the corridor as confidence in the area decreased.

The recent decision to construct transit and an arterial roadway will reverse the trend as a land development program, coordinated by the Governor's Office, is planned within the cleared right-of-way. Furthermore, transit stations at Roxbury Crossing and Jackson Square, both located 1/4 mile from the project will provide much needed transit service into downtown Boston as well as to suburban employment areas.

North of the project is the Campus High Renewal Project in execution which will construct 400 new dwelling units as well as construct a new high school facility. To the east is the Washington Park area, a 502 acre renewal project, begun in 1963 which has constructed 1,700 housing units, rehabilitated 4,550 others, constructed a school, two libraries, eight parks, a police station and capital improvements to streets, sidewalks, utilities and lighting.

The Washington Park Project has already generated positive social and economic results which are evidenced by the higher incomes, lower crime rates and general overall stability which exists within the project. The Campus High Project to the north will have similar effects and, together with the transit improvements in the Southwest Corridor, will form a strong linkage of physical improvements which surround the project. In addition, the Model Cities Administration is preparing a master plan for the Highlands Park Area, to the south, which is geared toward physical rehabilitation of structures in conjunction with social programs.

All of these projects are expected to have positive impacts on the Kittredge Square area.

7. Historic Preservation

The proposed Kittredge Square Urban Renewal Project encompasses an area known locally as Roxbury Highlands, or Highland Park. Tying between John Eliot Square to the north, the historic center of Roxbury, and Highland Park itself on the high land to the south, where the standpipe marks the site of the Revolutionary War Fort, Roxbury Highlands covers a topographically and architecturally interesting area that provides a full cross section of suburban architecture of the period 1830-1900.

Briefly, the development of the Highlands began in the 1830's when large estates were purchased on newly laidout streets. The earlier estates bore stately mansions reflecting fashionable architectural styles of the period; this trend continued into the third quarter of the century. Then, as land values increased, the smaller lots of land from earlier estates were sold off for detached houses, but more often, lots were sold to developers for the construction of row houses which were purchased individually. The 1880's and 1890's witnessed the proliferation of frame three deckers on available land, and the turn of the century the Highlands became completely built up with the three story brick structures. Although deteriorated, Roxbury Highlands remains an unusual area of notable architecture which illustrates most styles and building types associated with the Vistorian era.

Within the proposed Kittredge Square project are two structures which have been submitted to the National Register of Historic Places: 1) the Edward Everett Hale House, 12 Morely Street, 1841; 2) the Alvah Kittredge House, 10 Linwood Street, 1836. Both are Greek Revival mansions with distinctive characteristics of their type and are associated with lines of three illustrious persons (Alvah Kittredge, Nathaniel J. Bradlee, and Edward Everett Hale). An important landmark, though not a building which meets the criteria of

evaluation for historic significance of the National Register is the Milestone, in the wall opposite # 45 Centre St., 1729, which is one of a series of 18th century milestones on the inland route. Although outside the proposed Project Area boundaries, the William Lloyd Garrison House, 125 Highland Street, is a National Historic Landmark, and John Eliot Square and Highland Park with its monument, the stand pipe, have been submitted to the National Register.

Potential Impact

The most significant impact from the proposed Kittredge Square project would be on the Alvah Kittredge House. Although hemmed in by later buildings, the house must not be further encroached upon by construction inconsistent with the scale and massing of the Kittredge House. Other notable buildings on Linwood Street include #54, c. 1840, a Greek Revival house in poor condition, and #56, c. 1870, and elaborately detailed mansard cottage. Linwood Square, a cul-de-sac off Linwood Street, is of considerable interest as a grouping of homogeneous structures: the combination of a brick row, a double frame house, and series detached frame cottages exhibit different attitudes of the French mansard influence.

Construction on Cedar Street and Cedar Place should take into consideration the scale, massing, and materials of the Garrison House and the structures of lesser importance on Cedar Street. They include #46, c. 1860, an imposing Italianate mansion, and #46, c. 1890, a fine intact example of a three-decker.

Design Considerations

In general, all construction within the proposed project area should respect and sensitively enhance the historic assets. Scale, color, material, massing, density, and set backs should be controlled by existing structures to reduce the impact on them. However, imitative, historicizing designs should not be permitted. Rehabilitation should involve the same standards to enhance original stylistic character.

The existing street pattern which dates from the first half of the 19th century must be maintained. Likewise, the two small open spaces, Kittredge Square and Linwood Park, should be rehabilitated as green parks. Surface parking should not be completely open to view from the street using landscaping to shield such areas from view.

The Kittredge Square Urban Renewal Plan, attached hereto, contains development controls and objectives which remain in effect for a period of forty years from the date of project execution. These controls contain explicit restrictions governing the development of residential parcels to insure that development meets rational planning and design standards as well as community objectives.

Compliance with these controls is assured by the design review process which includes a series of five submissions at various design stages of all development plans for review by Authority staff. Furthermore, all plans must be formally approved by both the Model Neighborhood Board and the BRA before

designation of developer may take place. Additional controls in the form of restrictive covenants may be included as part of the Land Disposition Agreement for development parcels.

C. ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

It is not anticipated that the proposed project will generate adverse impacts which cannot be avoided.

D. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Two alternatives, clearance and do nothing were discussed with the community during the early phases of planning and were rejected by the community, the Model Cities Agency and the Redevelopment Authority because they would either relocate existing tenants and homeowners or would not revitalize the neighborhood.

Within the project development parcels were planned utilizing existing vacant land parcels within the Kittredge Square Project Area. The planning objectives for this project were to preserve existing housing stock and not impose relocation upon long-time residents. These objectives were proposed and strongly supported by community residents.

Furthermore, funding limitations for this project precluded consideration of larger clearance areas which would have increased project costs beyond grant reservation levels.

Given these constraints, alternative development plans were not developed.

E. SHORT-TERM/LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

The project will have no impact on the long-term productivity of the natural environment.

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